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SPECIAL ANALYSIS

CUBA-US: The Counterattack on Radio Marti

by [redacted] CIA

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The recent spate of authoritative warnings from Havana about the US's new Radio Marti--reinforced last week by increased interference with several US commercial stations--is intended to demonstrate to Washington that Cuba will retaliate vigorously against planned US broadcasts. [redacted] confirm Havana's claims that it has the capability to respond with jamming and powerful broadcasts of its own. [redacted]

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Deputy Foreign Minister Alarcon, the official in charge of Cuba's counterbroadcasts, told a US journalist last month that Havana would jam some US commercial broadcasting if Radio Marti went on the air. He warned that the US is much more vulnerable than Cuba to such interference. Increased interference was noted by several US broadcasters on 30 August. [redacted]

25X1

President Castro and Armed Forces Minister Raul Castro also warned of retaliation during informal conversations on 18 August with Western journalists visiting Cuba. The remarks of these three key officials presumably were timed to coincide with consideration of the Radio Marti funding bill by the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee. [redacted]

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The Cubans apparently are counting on US broadcasters and their clients to persuade the administration, either directly or through Congress, to drop plans for the broadcasts. Alarcon has admitted as much. His comments suggest the Cuban Government believes it can outlast the US in the event of a radiobroadcasting and jamming war. [redacted]

25X1

Evidence of Cuban Intentions

25X1

10 September 1982

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plans to create Radio Marti were announced by Washington last September, eight transmitter sites have been modified by the construction of additional towers to form antenna arrays oriented toward the US. [redacted] 25X1

The arrays are designed either to jam broadcasts from the US or to beam programs into the US. Erected speedily, at least two of these new antenna systems appear to have been ready by 28 January, the date originally set for the inauguration of Radio Marti. [redacted] 25X1

Since September 1981 Havana has shifted a number of medium-wave stations to different frequencies. These changes have reduced interference with other broadcasters in the region while increasing interference with US stations. [redacted] 25X1

A fairly reliable source reports that, in response to an urgent Cuban request, Czechoslovakia last October was providing Havana with four 1-kilowatt mobile radio transmitters and would send 10 5-kilowatt transmitters in 1982. These transmitters probably were to be used as jammers or to free more powerful Cuban transmitters for jamming or counterbroadcasts. [redacted] 25X1

Several sources have reported that Havana's plans for retaliation include broadcasts in English over high-powered transmitters. The Cubans will name this effort Radio Lincoln. Castro has warned that the counterbroadcasts will focus on fomenting civil strife in the US. [redacted] 25X1

Cuban Vulnerability

The outspoken condemnations of US plans for Radio Marti by Cuban officials and the aggressive, costly campaign to counter it indicate the depth of Castro's concern. This apparently stems in large part from fears his control of virtually all of the media to which Cubans have access may be seriously challenged at a time of increasing austerity. Moreover, there are clear signs of a widening gap between the leadership and the postrevolution generation, as high school and university graduates try to find scarce jobs and places to live. [redacted] 25X1

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9

10 September 1982

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The exodus of 1980 alerted Castro to the magnitude of popular dissatisfaction. A year later, he admitted to a visiting parliamentary delegation that he believed a half million Cubans would emigrate if given the chance. In addition, events in Poland apparently showed him the political perils of a discontented population. [REDACTED]

Convinced the US plans to use Radio Marti to foment unrest in Cuba, Castro has shown an uncharacteristic lack of confidence that the Cuban population will reject the broadcasts. By investing in new antennas, jamming US commercial broadcasts, preparing counterbroadcasts in English, and making threats, Castro is confirming that Radio Marti would enjoy a wide and receptive audience in Cuba. [REDACTED]

Since September Havana has taken off the air its own daily medium-wave English broadcasts to the US and its medium-wave broadcasts of Radio Moscow's English programs for the US. Havana did so to prevent the US from claiming Radio Marti is in retaliation for broadcasts from Cuba. [REDACTED]

The Probable Impact

The Castro regime has always tried to control the information available in Cuba. Many Cubans, however, reportedly are weary of the slanted news, constant indoctrination, and colorless programming that characterize the Cuban media. They probably are eager for reliable news and data with which to assess the performance of their government. [REDACTED]

There is no core of organized resistance in Cuba around which the disgruntled can gather. A better informed public, however, would be less amenable to the regime's exhortations for greater effort and sacrifice, making Havana's economic goals even more difficult to achieve. Should the US broadcasts provoke civil disorder in Cuba, however, Havana is certain to increase repression and probably would react in some dramatic fashion, such as organizing another emigration such as occurred in 1980. [REDACTED]

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